



## ANNUAL REPORT OF MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### Operation of the Management Improvement Plan

The progress which the BAE has made in developing and instituting a management improvement program has been extremely gratifying. A year ago there was only one staff person (at GS-7) available to concentrate on an organized program of management improvement. The Bureau has had in operation for several years a number of the techniques designed to systematically review operations to determine the degree of its efficiency and to locate opportunities for improvement. Within the past year, another staff member was obtained and during the last half of the past fiscal year, more organized attention has been paid to the scheduling of action to achieve improvements in both program and administrative operations.

The Bureau's management improvement plan places the responsibility for improvement on the operating officials. It is, therefore, the function of the management staff to point up needs, to stimulate and suggest action, and to assist the operating officials in carrying out specific action to improve the effectiveness of operating programs.

Naturally, since the organized management improvement plan of the Bureau is still in the formative stages, a major portion of the activity so far has been of a preliminary nature. Much effort has been placed on building up close working relationships between the program officials and the management staff. The resulting mutual confidence is not only breaking down the natural barriers which normally exist between these groups but is creating an understanding on the part of both that they are working toward the same end and that each has a major contribution to make.

Since real progress in improved management comes about only when the real program managers, the operating supervisors, fully understand and accept their responsibility, we are working on the initial stages of a long-range plan for clarifying this understanding and bringing about more significant improvements in program management.

The efforts of the few people available to concentrate on the program have been, of necessity, confined to those areas where the need has been the greatest. Improvement in operations is brought about every day in some sections throughout the Bureau. Most of it never reaches the staff level for reporting purposes. Attention is to be given to ways for recording the knowledge of these day-to-day improvements. The items which follow represent definite accomplishments in bettering operations in various parts of the BAE - some being the more tangible items resulting from daily activities and others being part of the coordinated plan of the Bureau.

The Bureau will be giving more attention to identifying those units and individuals that are making outstanding contributions to the program. The Chief has just issued a memorandum reorganizing the Efficiency Awards Committee and instructing that committee to cooperate fully with the departmental program of awards and recognition for those who render exceptional service.

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B. Schedules of Management Improvement Action

I. Improvement of Field Office Practices and Procedures

The improvement project submitted last year which proposed the survey of seven of the forty-one Agricultural Estimates field offices has been carried through to and to some extent into the implementation stage. These surveys were perhaps the most comprehensive ever conducted within the BAE. All aspects of field office operations were studied by teams composed of both members of the technical staff of Agricultural Estimates and management personnel. Interests of the management teams ranged from the most routine administrative detail to the complex procedures connected with the collection, tabulation, analysis, and interpretation of crop and livestock data and the release of State estimates. The first office was visited in January 1950 and the last of the seven offices was surveyed in April 1950. Heavy seasonal workloads in the offices caused some delay in the conduct of the surveys. From 5 to 8 work days were spent in each office depending upon its size. All survey data collected was subjected to detailed analysis and discussion by members of the two management teams and selected field statisticians during a two week conference in May. Service-wide proposals and recommendations were drafted and transmitted to the Assistant Chief for Agricultural Estimates where they are now under study. A few of these improvement items had been suggested to the several offices during the study and already have been adopted. However all areas of improvement were included in the final report to insure the proper understanding and implementation of the proposals and to further instill the concept of a "total management" approach in our improvement effort.

Since this study has not reached the stage at which definite and concrete benefits can be tabulated we are taking the opportunity to indicate a few of the significant areas which give promise of producing the desired results.

(1) Organization Structure - Distribution of Responsibility

Survey results indicate very definitely the desirability of adopting a standard organization plan for all offices. This plan, followed basically in some offices, will eliminate misunderstanding resulting from uncertain lines of authority, assignments of responsibility, and working relationships.



## (2) Statistical Methodology

The improvement prospects in the methodological aspects of the work are more than encouraging. These areas require considerably more research and study before actual changes may be put into effect. Some of the objectives are (1) improved sampling procedures, (2) improved schedule design, (3) elimination of unnecessary weighting of averages, (4) increased reporter response, (5) elimination of questionable report processing steps, and (6) adoption of a small listing sheet in place of a large sheet to minimize storage problems and permit easier handling while in use. Since collection and tabulation work constitutes a major portion of state office work, basic improvements will have far-reaching effects in conserving manpower to accomplish the maximum of work with the funds available.

### (3) Uniform Records System

Some progress has been made toward the development of a uniform records system in the field offices. Considerable research must be carried on before a truly effective system can be devised which is flexible enough to accomodate the particular needs of each office. The Bureau Records Analyst, in giving direct assistance to immediate disposal of certain obsolete records has focused attention on the necessity for and implications of a clearly defined retention policy. This problem is of major importance since most of these offices have been in operation for nearly 40 years and the accumulation, during that period, of records of permanent value is a matter which is not subject to the normal solutions for disposing of administrative records.

### (4) Manual Operations

Many time saving techniques were observed in connection with the mail, duplicating, and statistical clerical operations. When adopted by offices using less efficient methods, the many fragments of time saved will be substantial. These better techniques are to be tested under controlled conditions before actual adoption as standard techniques. It is planned, where practicable, to issue standard operating procedures and production standards for this type of operation.

### (5) Space - Office Layout

Both crowded and relatively loose space arrangements were observed during the surveys. Helpful suggestions have been made and are being put into effect. Space and office layout specifications for all offices respecting the problems peculiar to crop reporting work are an objective in this area.



Numerous other aspects of the Agricultural Estimates field office operations have also been closely scrutinized. The feeling is prevalent that this initial step toward an improved crop and livestock reporting program has opened the way for additional and more intensive study. We now have a better basic understanding of the problems which confront the field offices. Many of the areas in the study, however, point up the necessity for observation of Washington operations and the means by which better coordination of both field and Washington operations would result.

Resources for accelerating this study are not immediately available. A very limited Management Planning staff faces a choice between the necessity of assisting in the implementation of existing improvement proposals, spearheading the additional study necessary in many of the potential improvement areas, studying the related Washington operations and reaching other field offices by the survey method to broaden the base for improvement possibilities.

### III. Daily Performance Record

The Daily Performance Record covering all Agricultural Estimates State offices was modified and reinstated on July 1, 1949. Two years prior to that time it had been discontinued because of the excessive amount of time required to tabulate and summarize the information. Now, however, all tabulating and summarizing operations are performed on IBM equipment and the information made readily available for administrative review and use. This reduces the summarization formerly required of field offices. One of the principal uses of the latest annual summary has been in connection with the preparation of current budget materials.

This summary will enable program officials to (1) determine the direct personnel cost of individual work projects, (2) distribute the cost of the field establishments between the several activities, (3) budget the cost of new work projects and continuing projects for the ensuing year, (4) adjust the field work program of State offices to reflect the relative importance of different projects, and (5) administratively control field operations.

Other uses of the performance data are, of course, anticipated especially with respect to determining the relative effectiveness and efficiency of State offices. Such measurements will require the establishment of performance standards and further refinements in the system itself. Considerable work lies ahead in measuring the productivity of the state office employees in relation to the time and methods used as a basis for establishing performance standards.



These performance summaries have also been very helpful to the State statistician and the State cooperating agency in planning a mutually satisfactory program.

### III. Establishment of Records Depository

The BAE Washington offices formerly maintained the practice of storing non-current records separately in assigned storage areas. Long accumulations of records not accompanied by periodic screenings and disposition had resulted in extremely crowded storage areas. In addition poor and individual division storage methods did not provide for the most effective use of the records nor the space which they occupied.

The Records Management Officer working in close cooperation with division research and administrative personnel has carried out a very successful disposition job. Because of this positive cooperative action enough storage space was freed to permit the establishment of a central records depository. This move has resulted not only in an actual savings through the release of excess, as well as old and obsolete, equipment but also in a greatly improved system to control the accumulation and disposition of non-current records.

### IV. Experiments with Distinctive Envelopes Used for Mailing Questionnaires

During the past year Agricultural Estimates branch has conducted some experiments in several field locations to test the effect of distinctive envelopes upon response of farmers and others to questionnaires. The object of the study was to determine whether distinctive printing on the envelope would increase the percentage of those who responded, thus giving better estimates and possibly cutting cost by eventually reducing the numbers of names needed on the mailing lists. The special envelopes were drawn up with the approval of the Post Office Department and carry a special border design as well as special printing in the lower left corner where the contents of the envelope are identified as an official report of the Department. This special envelope was tried in five widely separated states in such a way as to draw a true comparison between the effect of the old and new envelopes on respondents.

In every state the use of the special envelopes increased the number of schedules returned, over the number returned using ordinary envelopes. The percentage return in special envelopes exceeded the returns with ordinary envelopes by 11% to 21%, the average increase in returns for all states being 17.4%. These totals represent mostly reporters who were already reporting in the ordinary envelopes before the test started, but new reporters were also included.



The increased response from new reporters, who had never received schedules in the ordinary envelopes, is especially significant. Separate records of these were kept, which show that those who had never received any except the special envelopes returned 48 percent more schedules than those who received ordinary envelopes for the first time.

The use of special envelopes has proven so successful that the Bureau plans to furnish them for all states for use under similar circumstances. These special envelopes will be used for mailing schedules only. If the higher rate of returns from schedules mailed can be maintained it will be possible in some instances to reduce the volume of schedules mailed without impairing the quality of the end product, thus reducing the cost of envelopes and schedules as well as making important savings in clerical time. For some types of reports the present mailings do not consistently yield a sufficiently high return to provide an adequate sample for estimating purposes. In such instances the advantages to be gained by the special envelopes will be more in terms of improved quality and coverage of the estimates than in actual savings in time and material.

#### V. Recruitment of Professional Staff

Response by colleges to the Bureau's Student Aid Training program has been good in the past year. The plan provides that recruited students work part-time in the state office and adjust their college courses so that upon graduation they are both qualified and trained for a statistical position in a state office. All colleges that were asked to offer a candidate responded favorably. Four trainees were engaged early during the session 1949-50. Action was deferred on the appointment of three other suitably qualified candidates who applied too late to make desirable adjustments in their courses of study.

The experience in four offices indicates that this plan is feasible and that trainees can contribute a full measure of productive work during the course of their training. The establishment of practical recruitment standards still presents a problem. Few colleges offer majors that involve the combination of agricultural and mathematical courses desired for agricultural statistician positions.

#### VI. New Plan for Staff Meetings

To assure the best use of time and talent and provide for proper communication and discussion of Bureau problems, the Chief of the Bureau has instituted a new staff meeting plan. This plan calls for regular weekly meetings to be attended alternately by (1) the small group of assistant chiefs and technical assistants surrounding the Chief, and (2) the full complement



of program division heads and key administrative personnel in the Bureau. Notices for each meeting are distributed in advance containing the agenda, allowing for proper allotment of time to subject matter and necessary preparation for all participants. When desirable a brief statement of policy conclusions reached is circulated immediately afterward to insure uniformity of understanding.

#### VII. Typing Manuscripts for Offset Printing

Studies of the costs of printing reports and manuscripts have enabled the Bureau to establish certain criteria to determine which should be reproduced by regular printing and which by offset. Until recently most manuscripts had been printed and the operation was performed by submitting a draft in rough form to the printer for final preparation. This operation now consists of typing most manuscripts in final form with an electrostatic typewriter. With the material in such finished form offset printing is accomplished more quickly with significant savings in preparation and reproduction costs.

#### VIII. Questionnaire Review and Design

The collection and analysis of data consumes the bulk of the time and effort of the state office employees. During the past year much time and effort was devoted to the review and redesign of some 50 questionnaires used in the state offices to collect agricultural statistical data. A properly designed questionnaire not only assures the state office of getting the needed information with sufficient numbers of "returns", but the work involved in tabulating and analyzing the data collected is simplified and expedited. The statisticians who performed this work last year actually fitted this work into an already crowded program. Their time was well spent, for generally good results were achieved.

During the management survey it was observed that employees of some state offices were unfolding questionnaires, printed and folded at the GPO, and refolding them so they could be addressed and inserted in window envelopes. Consequently a number of the schedules have been redesigned so that they can be used in any kind of standard envelope.

We shall continue to give attention to this problem. We are now considering a more extensive research program into schedule design as it relates to percentage of returns. We hope that both printing and clerical costs can be reduced by designing schedules so that the higher percentage of returns will obviate the necessity of maintaining and using mailing lists as large as at present.



IX. Property Utilization Survey

As the result of participation in a department-wide property utilization survey conducted during the past year 1,597 units were uncovered that were excess to the needs of the Bureau. Of this number 950 with a book value of \$17,984.12 have been disposed of by transfer, or other methods. This survey also served to reduce stocks of excess expendable supplies by limiting the quantities ordered, thus adjusting inventories to more reasonable levels. In addition annual usage estimates of expendable supplies were developed and are now being used as criteria in purchasing supplies for all state offices. This survey also had the salutary effect of improving housekeeping practices in all BAE offices. It further resulted in the disposition of a large volume of unneeded records.

X. Speeding up Release of Livestock Slaughter and Meat Production Report

In conjunction with the Bureau of Animal Industry and the Production and Marketing Administration procedures were instituted that resulted in releasing the Livestock Slaughter and Meat Production Report one week earlier than formerly without requiring earlier submission of non-federally inspected slaughter reports by BAE field offices.

XI. Institution of a Better Method of Estimating Livestock Slaughter

Considerable progress was made during fiscal year 1950 in instituting a better statistical method of estimating livestock slaughter. This is known as the "ratio to base" method. It is now being used in nearly all states. It has resulted in more accurate estimates with less time required for analysis and processing the data.



Several projects listed in the Management Improvement Statement submitted September 21, 1949 have not been mentioned specifically in this report. They are as follows:

<u>Project No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Disposition</u>
III	Maximum utilization of survey and statistical tabulation section.	A study of this operation indicated better than average utilization of machines and personnel. Special attention, other than periodic administrative reviews, is not contemplated in the immediate future.
IV	Project record designation system.	Completed.
V	Coordination of reports.	Combined with current project C II.
VI	To increase efficiency in statistical computations.	This method of multiple correlation, placed in operation on a limited basis, indicates a substantial saving of clerical time. Further testing and professional review will be made prior to general adoption.
VII	Conservation of printing funds.	Reported under project B VII



### C. List of Individual Operating Problems

#### I. Study of Agricultural Estimates Washington Office

A. Problem: The management study of the state offices brought into focus a number of problems which hampered the most effective field job, but which could be solved only by changing either operating practices or policies of the Washington offices. No detailed review of the way operations are conducted in Washington, or the reason why, has been made for a number of years. The Assistant Chief in charge of Agricultural Estimates feels that it is inappropriate to suggest major operational changes to the field offices unless it can be shown that similar action is being taken in Washington to facilitate the field program.

B. Improvement activities: Initiating date: October 1950  
Completion date: September 1951

- (1) The only action last fiscal year was the recognition of the problem and preliminary discussion as to the areas to be considered.
- (2) It is proposed to organize a survey team, similar to those which studied the field offices, composed of some of the same management and professional people, which will carry out a detailed study of (a) the technical procedures involved in processing agricultural estimates, (b) the reasons certain policies are followed, (c) the methods for coordinating and assigning field work load, (d) the basis for allotment of funds and changes in allotments, (e) the policies governing the assignment, transfer and promotion of personnel, (f) the methods by which both Washington and field work can be simplified, and (g) the extent to which the service to the agricultural industries can be improved. Estimated 1.2 man years.
- (3) The survey should be completed during fiscal year 1951 but it is probable that the analysis and review of recommendations and the institution of agreed-upon changes will not take place until 1952. Estimated 0.6 man years.

#### II. Study of Economic Research Program

A. Problem: Since the BAE is the primary agency of the USDA for economic research, it conducts economic studies on a wide variety of subjects. Currently, there are 309 active projects. The coordination of these projects presents an extremely complex problem. But even more difficult and more important is the review process which is designed to bring pertinent facts to the attention of the program officials in such a way that they are able to (1) provide coordination, (2) appraise results, (3) decide on continuation or elimination, (4) determine amounts to be invested in the project for the budget, and (5) prepare needed reports.



B. Improvement Activities: Initiation date: September 1950  
Completion date: September 1951

- (1) Several years ago, the uniform project system was instituted in the Bureau to help accomplish these purposes. During the past year continued attention has been given to the preparation of up-to-date project statements for all lines of work being carried on in the Bureau. This has been of material assistance in bringing about better coordination between the work of different units.
- (2) In order to appraise the results of the work now under way and to determine what kind of adjustments should be made in the program, the Chief of the Bureau is conducting series of conferences with the division leaders and assistant chiefs. Each line of work is discussed fully and a decision is made as to the importance of the results to date, the desirability of continuation and the amount of funds to be allotted.

While this form of review serves its purpose, it is believed that the uniform project system can be used in a manner which would bring these facts to the attention of the proper officials in the regular course of administration. It is particularly desirable that a reporting system be designed which serves a multiplicity of purposes and relieves the program leaders of proposing several special reports each year for the same project but for different purposes. It is also desirable that the system keep the Bureau officials fully informed currently of the effectiveness of the work. Accordingly, consideration is being given to the conduct of a study by a team of management and research men of the ways in which research is carried on, how assignments are made and received, how the work is carried on, how the results are reported and the use made of the reports. Such a study would not only consider what has been done, but also what should be done. It is anticipated that such a study would clarify training needs, provide an organized plan of continuing review, establish a reporting technique which would serve more than one purpose, show the real significant accomplishments, and demonstrate the value of the particular line of work. Estimated 0.4 man years.

- (3) If the above study is started during the latter part of the fiscal year 1951, it will continue into the next fiscal year in order to obtain facts on which to base a revision of research methods and practices as well as an efficient reporting procedure.



### III. Scheduling the Preparation and Printing of Questionnaires

A. The Problem: Furnishing questionnaires to field offices in advance of previously established mailing dates presents a scheduling problem which involves some production stages that are not under the control of the BAE. The late arrival of questionnaires in the field throws the entire work program off schedule and frequently involves extra man hours and the assignment of professional employees to clerical work. The estimates derived from the questionnaires must be submitted on a fixed due date; therefore, delays in mailing questionnaires jeopardize a satisfactory response and impose undue pressure upon field employees who process the data to arrive at estimates. The management study of state offices identified this problem as the most vexing one confronting field people.

B. Improvement Activities: Initiation date: July 1950  
Completion date: November 1950

(1) Much attention has been given to this problem from time to time but a completely satisfactory solution has not been found. The scheduling of the printing through the GPO has been improved and some saving has been made in the time required by BAE employees in developing and revising questionnaires.

(2) An assistant was recently added to the staff of the Crop Reporting Board to work on this problem. This person is able to devote the necessary attention to the proper development and procurement of questionnaires from the time they are initially planned until they are finally shipped to the field offices. This will aid materially in getting delivery of schedules to the field in advance of required mailing dates, saving clerical time, and facilitating better planning of the office work load.

Consideration is now being given to the procurement of some mechanical means for keeping track of the many stages of completion in many different offices, both within and outside the BAE. He will have a continuing task of expediting the preparation of questionnaires. Estimated 0.8 man years.



#### IV. Experiments with Distinctive Envelopes Used for Mailing Questionnaires

- A. Problem: The number of persons who respond to our questionnaires by voluntarily providing the information requested is too low to satisfy our goals for an effective service and has been declining for several years. The cost is higher than it should be because of the large number of questionnaires that have to be mailed out to get a sufficiently large sample for accurate estimating.

B. Improvement Activities: Initiation Date: August 1949  
Completion Date: March 1951

- (1) Experiments were conducted in five states using a specially designed and printed envelope. The purpose was to determine whether or not a special envelope would stimulate better reporting by a larger number of respondents. Records were kept to compare the response between two similar groups; one which received the distinctive envelopes and the other which received the usual plain envelope. Estimated 0.1 man years.
- (2) Since our first year's experiments showed such a large increase in returns, we shall use them in all states during 1951 and thereafter. It may be that the good results are only because of the radical design of the envelope. Periodic spot checks will need to be made to determine the continuing effectiveness of this device.
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- V. Uniform Records System for Field Offices
- A. Problem: There is considerable variation in the systems used in the field offices to maintain both current and non-current records. Many years ago the Dewey Decimal system was adopted as a standard filing system for all state offices, but the offices discovered over a period of years that this system did not meet their needs fully. Modifications have been made and the system has been allowed to fall into disrepair. Large quantities of records are accumulated each year and unless an effective maintenance and disposal procedure can be followed on a current basis, needed records are not always accessible, and a disproportionate amount of space must be assigned as storage area. A uniform system would eliminate the additional training now required when an employee transfers between offices which have entirely different systems. Uniform emphasis is not placed on records management throughout the offices. Uniform emphasis, coupled with a uniform records system, will provide more useful records and insure proper accessioning and disposition practices.
- B. Improvement Activities: Initiation Date: December 1949  
Completion Date: March 1952



(1) During the past year the Bureau's Records Analyst was able to study the records and record systems of four of the seven offices surveyed by the management team mentioned previously in this report. In addition to obtaining information upon which a uniform system might be based, considerable assistance was given the offices on the disposal of certain non-current records and on the screening of current working files to determine what materials might be better stored elsewhere. The several systems observed contained both good and bad features. These preliminary observations indicate the necessity for more extensive study of present practices and needs. Estimated 0.1 man years.

(2) For the current year we have planned further investigations provided travel funds are available for this purpose. At the present time the records analyst is in the field carrying out a rather complete inventory and disposition survey for five offices. At the same time, he is arranging for the disposition of old records both through destruction and transfer to Records Depositories administered by General Services Administration. While these service functions are being rendered the analyst is also collecting necessary information for use in developing a uniform system for the entire field service. It has been recommended, and will probably be started soon, that intensive research as to the complete needs and the most workable system be undertaken at a nearby office (to save travel funds). A revised system should be completed and ready for installation in all offices before the end of the fiscal year. Estimated 0.6 man years.

(3) During 1952 the system would be installed in as many states as possible. This will be done through group instruction, but assistance will have to be given in many offices to see that the changes are completed satisfactorily. The extent to which the states are covered will depend upon the availability of staff and travel funds. Estimated 1.0 man years.

#### VI. Daily Performance Records

A. Problem: The State Agricultural Estimating Offices are engaged in many work projects to prepare the regular reports released by the Crop Reporting Service. In addition, they are called upon to do a great deal of special statistical and service work. The knowledge of the cost of carrying out the different work projects is a matter of extreme importance in budgeting, allotting funds to the states, determining whether new activities will be undertaken and coordinating the work load. While the costs must be computed, the reporting requirements must not create too much of a burden on the field personnel.

B. Improvement Activities: Initiation date: May 1949  
Completion date: Continuing



(1) A new system of reporting each person's time for each day's activities by projects was instituted in July 1949. The record is kept by each employee, and every month the state offices send a complete set of records to Washington where the date is coded and punched on IBM cards. These are then tabulated quarterly by states and by projects for analysis. There were some difficulties in the use of the form at first, so a revision was made and tested in several states. The revised form proved easier to keep, so it was substituted in all states in August 1950. Estimated 0.5 man years.

(2) The records will probably be maintained indefinitely and will be analyzed regularly. More attention will be devoted to analysis this year since we now have a full year's records to work with. Attention will also be given to correlating these time records with production records in selected areas for the purpose of establishing standards of performance. Estimated 0.7 man years.

(3) Continued maintenance and analysis of records. Estimated 0.3 man years.

## VII. Improvement and Standardization of Practices and Procedures in Field Offices

A. Problem: The 41 field offices engaged in the preparation of agricultural estimates have diverse official interests and operating methods. Heavy work loads involving the constant meeting of deadlines in addition to the absence of a full-time methods and procedure staff has hindered the development of improved operating practices and procedures. Organization plans for the individual offices vary considerably and lines of authority and responsibility are not always clear. The habits and customs imbedded in many offices also pose the problem of introducing new practices and procedures after they have been discovered and determined to be more efficient. Some method must be developed also whereby good ideas and improved techniques discovered in one office may be passed on to all offices for adoption.

B. Improvement Activities: Initiation date: November 1949  
Completion date: June 1953

(1) During the latter part of the past year 7 of the 41 state offices were surveyed. Teams composed of management and program personnel, usually a total of 3 or 4 members to a team, visited each of the 7 offices. The response to the surveys by most field employees was enthusiastic. Each office showed sincere interest in what was being done and were anxious to participate. The mission of the survey teams was one primarily of fact finding for use in developing solutions to national operating problems, but suggestions for improvements were made and put into effect. Quite a few of the improvement possibilities require top administration decisions or policy changes and these have been presented in a formal report to the Assistant Chief for Agricultural Estimates. Estimated 2.0 man years.



(2) Surveys of other offices in the Agricultural Estimates field organization are not anticipated during the current year. It is probable however that return visits to the offices already surveyed will be made to aid in the implementation of certain changes. It is planned to do some further research and conduct some controlled experiments to determine the best techniques for a number of the operations on which measurement and reports indicate the desirability of devoting time and effort to a study of the central office before starting new work in the field. The Assistant Chief for Agricultural Estimates has requested the commencement of this work in the near future. Estimated 1.5 man years.

(3) Plans for the budget year depend to a large extent upon the completion of current year undertakings. If this work is completed on schedule additional field offices will be visited and efforts will be made to install the standards in all offices. Estimated 3.0 man years.

## VIII.

### Questionnaire Review and Design

A. Problem: In order to develop accurate and reliable crop and livestock estimates, the BAE maintains, in each state office, extensive lists of persons who have signified their willingness to furnish us with certain types of information from time to time. Since their response is purely voluntary, the percentage of those who comply is disappointingly low at times and we are constantly striving to increase the rate of return. We believe that schedule, or questionnaire, design has a great deal to do with this rate of response.

## B. Improvement Activities: Continuing problem

(1) About 50 questionnaires were reviewed and revised as part of the regular operations involved in preparing the national programs for dissemination to the field.

One of the field offices conducted some controlled experiments on the rate of return among different groups of respondents who received different questionnaires covering the same subject matters. While the results of these experiments are considered important, they are not conclusive, and, therefore, further research on this subject will be necessary.

(2) An assistant has recently been added to the staff of the Secretary of the Crop Reporting Board who will have as a part of his duties the responsibility of assisting the commodity statisticians in revising and improving the design of schedules.

(3) This matter will continue to receive regular and special attention as circumstances warrant and funds permit.



**IX. Recruitment of Professional Staff**

A. Problem: The BAE continues to have difficulty locating recent college graduates with the proper combination of training in agricultural subjects and statistics most needed for a career in agricultural statistics. Some graduates lack the required experience or training in agricultural subjects, others in statistics, and others in their understanding of research methodology and techniques.

B. Improvement Activities: Initiation date: August 1949  
Completion date: Continuing

- (1) Requests to ten colleges in the past year resulted in the prompt placement of four trainees in as many offices. Additional students could have been appointed had their applications not been received late. Experience has indicated that the student aid plan is feasible and that trainees can contribute a full measure of productive work during the course of their training. They learn something about the practical application of the techniques they are studying in school and at the end of the training period are well qualified for our work. Estimated 0.1 man years.
- (2) Plans for the current year call for additional offers to be made to other colleges. Some of the students placed last year will be carried over to 1951. However, the uncertainty as to the funds available to the Bureau for the current fiscal year make it questionable whether we can expand the program as planned, especially during the first semester. Estimated 0.1 man years.
- (3) This activity will be carried on as a regular part of the Bureau's recruitment program with the extent of use depending on funds and need for trainee professional staff. Estimated 0.1 man years.

